

Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study Principals Group

To help achieve the vision of an economically and ecologically sustainable Upper Mississippi River System, I established a Principals Group in 2001, with Washington-level representatives from Federal agencies with an interest in our study of the system. The Principals Group includes representatives of the U.S. Department of Agriculture, U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, Environmental Protection Agency, and the Maritime Administration as well as the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers.

The Principals Group had their latest meeting on January 29, 2002. Their agenda included:

1. a review of regional collaboration on the ongoing study;
2. a status report on development of scenarios to predict the effects of navigation improvements and ecosystem restoration alternatives - these scenarios cover a wide range of possible economic and environmental conditions;
3. discussion of alternatives under consideration for navigation and ecosystem improvement;
4. identification of issues that must be addressed; and

the schedule of future events. The Principals Group endorsed the collaborative process the Corps is now using to study the river system and expressed support for the direction of the restructured study to date. Upcoming study events include regional public meetings in March 2002, a field review by my Environmental Advisory Board in April 2002, and completion of an Interim Report on the status of the study in July 2002.

Principals Group Meeting - January 29, 2002

The Upper Mississippi River & Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study Principals' Group met on January 29, 2002 to review the role of scenarios in recommending alternatives for navigation and ecosystem improvement measures, and the status of development of these scenarios. The scenarios will describe a range of possible future economic and environmental conditions in the Upper Mississippi Region. Using these scenarios, the study can examine alternative plans for system improvements under the range of future conditions to determine the need for and timing of navigation and ecosystem improvements. The economic scenarios will include trends, policies, conditions and events that impact United States agricultural production, prospects for agricultural exports, and plausible conditions unfavorable to trade and agricultural exports. The environmental scenarios will examine habitat and species diversity needs, migratory corridors, and water quality. These ecosystem trends will help define the need for improvement measures.

The Principals also discussed, at a conceptual level, the navigation and ecosystem improvement measures that may be considered in the final study. Navigation improvement could include non-structural measures such as traffic management; small-scale structures such as mooring cells and guidewall extensions; and large measures such as lock extensions and new locks. Ecological improvements could include fish passage structures, water level and sediment management; habitat restoration and more natural hydrologic cycles; and floodplain management. These measures will be combined into alternative plans and evaluated in increasing levels of detail as the study progresses. Authority, policy and funding issues will also be addressed, beginning in the Interim Report.

For more information Upper Mississippi River - Illinois Waterway System Navigation Study visit: <http://www.ursbethesda.com/umr-iwwsns>